Duolingo picture description exercises and tips

The strategy of describing the picture.

Start by describing the overall scene or setting: the place and maybe time of day the picture was taken (day, night).

Then describe the detail.

Use words like "background" – the other people are **in the background**, and **moving away from the camera**.

It is useful to learn and practice standard expressions for this exercise: in the foreground, on the left, in the top right-hand corner, etc.

Here are twelve words/expressions you can use to describe a picture (the list has been prepared by Le Chat/Mistral, France's AI platform):

1. **In the foreground**; The part of the picture that appears closest to the viewer.
2. **In the background**; The part of the picture that appears farthest from the viewer.
3. **On the left/right side**; Used to indicate the position of objects or people in the picture.
4. **At the top/bottom**; Refers to the highest or lowest part of the image.
5. **There is/are**; Used to describe the presence of objects or people in the picture.
6. **It looks like…**; Used to express an impression or guess about what something in the picture represents.
7. **The scene depicts…**; A formal way to describe what the picture shows or represents.
8. **The colors are vibrant/dull**; Describes the intensity or lack of intensity in the colors of the picture.
9. **The atmosphere is…**; Describes the overall mood or feeling conveyed by the picture.
10. **The main subject is…**; Identifies the primary focus or most important element in the picture.
11. **It seems to be…**; Used to make an educated guess about what is happening or what something is in the picture.
12. **The composition is…**; Refers to how the elements in the picture are arranged or organized.

Use the present simple

When you discuss the content of a picture, a book, a song or a video, etc. **use the present simple**, because the book or picture exists before and after you speak. You are describing a general truth.

In English, be very careful to conjugate **"there is" and "there are":** there are trees in the background. There is a dog in the foreground.

	The dog is prancing (jumping: to prance), maybe in a park. It's mainly grass, against the backdrop (the scene in the background) of a big mountain, that has clouds hanging in the top. And the dog is leashed (a leash is a chain attached to the collar, which the dog-owner holds to stop the dog running away. The dog is looking to be taking a walk/ The dog appears/seems to be taking a walk. There is a tree next to the dog, that is protected by a fence (on the right-hand side).

Behind, in the middle, we can see some muddy-looking round, which is not paved.

A paved road, or path is a road with tar, or perhaps cobblestones. The opposite is a dirt track: just a path on the ground. In front of the mountain, we see a line of tall trees.

The mountain is very steep and impressive.

Vocabulary:

A bicycle helmet

There is a log of greenery in the picture.

Sounds to be: this is more something spoken, or maybe an idea. "That sounds like a vey good idea". "Seems to be" is more general, and includes vision.

A steep slope is the opposite of a gentle slope: the gradient is strong or high.

A road in the centre

	This a cloudy day. There is no sunlight. The picture shows a path, on a *dyke* (a manmade separation between two bodies of water, or a kind of wall to hold back water). The weather is grey and gloomy (sad, the opposite of sunny).